

PRESS RELEASE
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**COUNTIES IMPLEMENTING NEW VOTING EQUIPMENT
FOR 2004 ELECTIONS ATTEND TRAINING**

Bismarck, N.D. – Last week, county election officials from 28 counties were in Bismarck to attend a training seminar for new voting equipment, which will be used for the 2004 elections. The new equipment is required by the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), which mandates states to make system upgrades and other improvements to the election process. All counties in the state will have the new voting systems in place for the 2006 elections.

Representatives from Election Systems and Software (ES&S) conducted the training in preparation for the state's upcoming June election. The firm was recently awarded the \$5.3 million contract for the new statewide voting systems.

Most voters will notice little change since they will still vote on paper ballots as they have done in past elections. The major change occurs after they have voted. Rather than placing the ballot into a ballot box, the voter will insert his or her ballot into an optical scan device. The device will then read the ballot and alert the voter if he or she has made a mistake on the ballot. As required by HAVA, the voter will then be provided the opportunity to correct the ballot before reinserting it into the scanner for final tabulation. If the ballot is error free, it will be tabulated for a final total at the end of the day.

In addition to the optical scan device, Williams and Grand Forks Counties will also be implementing a touch-screen voting device, known as the iVotronic. It is designed to allow voters with visual impairments and limited dexterity the opportunity to vote unassisted. It will also be available to any voter preferring to cast their ballot electronically. HAVA requires each polling location to have such a voting device in each of the state's polling location by January 1, 2006.

In addition to Williams and Grand Forks counties, the following counties will begin using the optical scanner in the 2004 elections: Adams, Benson, Billings, Bowman, Burke, Burleigh, Cass, Dickey, Dunn, Foster, Griggs, Logan, McHenry, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Pierce, Richland, Rolette, Sargent, Sheridan, Stark, Towner, Steele, Traill, and Ward. Approximately 3/5's of the state's polling locations are located in these counties.

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